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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and explains the validity and value of the experiential learning portfolio as an effective tool for workplace learning and development. Qualitative and survey methods of inquiry were used to produce data on the portfolio in workplace learning. Eight workers who developed experiential learning portfolios as a component of their undergraduate degree programs were interviewed. Major themes identified through these interviews were an increased recognition of professional accomplishments, a greater appreciation of the workplace as a learning venue, and an enhanced understanding of the role of mentors in workplace learning. Based on the interview findings, 24 survey questions were developed and sent to working adults who had completed portfolios as undergraduates. Responses from 151 workers reaffirmed the identified themes and indicated that the greater the understanding of learning that workers have throughout their careers, the more likely they are to understand their own progress and performance. Future research from this longitudinal study will explore connections between self-reflection and increases in learning through work experiences. One appendix contains a sample student portfolio, and the others contain the student survey and descriptive figures. (Contains 2 figures and 26 references.) (SLD)

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SIG: Workplace Learning

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Paper Discussion Sheraton, Armstrong Ballroom 8th floor

The Portfolio: A Tool for Workplace Learning and Development

By Dr. Judith O. Brown

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J. Brown

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The Portfolio: A Tool for Workplace Learning and Development

Introduction

Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lessons afterward.
Vernon Law

In accord with the theme of the AERA 2002 Annual Meeting, "Validity and Value in Educational Research," this paper explores and explains the validity and value of the experiential learning portfolio as an effective tool for workplace learning and development. Based on research of adult learners, who have developed portfolios describing their learning from work experiences, this paper intends to demonstrate the multiple uses of portfolios for individuals and their potential for group and organizational learning. The author presents findings from qualitative and survey methods of inquiry on the portfolio experience that produced both valid methods for data interpretation and valuable, useful and important findings on how, why and what we learn in work environments.

Background

It is well known that learning takes place throughout the lifespan and in a variety of venues (Knowles, 1984; Havighurst 1972; Levinson, 1977; Cross, 1981; Merriam & Caffarella, 1998). The workplace, where most individuals spend the majority of their time as adults, is a rich source of knowledge acquisition through everyday experiences calling on people's communication, critical thinking and interpersonal skills. This day-to-day learning from experience is the least recognized avenue of knowledge acquisition though research has shown that it is the most common way we learn (Boud & Walker,

1991; Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Notably, proficiency in one's profession requires not only education and training but recognizing and utilizing what one learns throughout one's career (Doombas, A. & Simons, P. R. J., 2001; Ellstrom, 1999; Eraut, 1998).

A tool with multiple purposes and the potential to capture workplace learning is the portfolio. Individual employees in an undergraduate degree program developed the portfolio model used in this study. It includes a Learning Resume, an Experience and Learning Worksheet, a Learning Narrative, and Documentation. Samples of this type of portfolio can be found in Appendix A. The Resume provides categories for positions and activities that led to learning. The Worksheet that follows expands on the Resume listings by enabling workers to separate what they did or are doing from what they learned or are learning (Whitaker, 1989). The Worksheet then becomes the outline for the Learning Narrative in which competencies gained are elaborated on in essay form. The final piece is Documentation that validates the previous parts of the portfolio through performance reviews, letters from employers and community organizations, training classes, and work samples.

This study begins with an examination of theoretical and practical frameworks that are relevant for portfolio utilization in workplace learning and development. It then describes and explains the methodologies used to gather data about the impact of portfolio development on the individuals who created them. This is followed by the findings from data inquiry and analysis. The study concludes with a discussion of portfolios as a potential training option.

Theoretical and Practical Frameworks

The key to the usefulness of portfolios is their emphasis on reflection as a door to discovery and rediscovery of competencies gained from on-the-job experiences. Educators have recognized learning from experience since the times of Lindeman (1926) and Dewey (1957), not to mention its reference in philosophy throughout the ages. Boud and Walker (1997), Kolb (1984), and others have noted as Sheckley and Keeton (1997) state that "experience yields explicit knowledge only if reflected upon" (p. 5).

The ideas of Mezirow (1990) on transformative learning best explain the type of learning possible through portfolio development. In regard to reflection and learning, Mezirow defines transformative learning, whether it takes place within professional, personal, or educational settings, as "the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights" (p. xvi). The process of critical reflection engaged in by employees in portfolio development presents the opportunity to transform both thinking and behavior

The importance of reflection as an essential element of learning cannot be overestimated. Knights (1992) noted, "reflection is clearly an important part of professional practice, but it is also important as part of the learning process" (p. 171). The time necessary for critical reflection in portfolio development can result in a wealth of self-knowledge with practical applications in the workplace. The creation of a portfolio can tap into rich sources of knowledge so often overlooked in traditional performance appraisals and evaluations. Portfolio creation can serve as a career development, personal

needs assessment, and performance appraisal tool. Additionally, it may also produce learning outcomes whereby individuals, groups, and organizations change their thinking and performance.

Methodology

Eight interviews of workers who developed experiential learning portfolios as a component of their undergraduate degree programs were conducted in the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999 (Brown, 1999). These interviews were transcribed and analyzed revealing themes directly related to the participants learning experiences in the workplace. The major themes included an increased recognition of their professional accomplishments, a greater appreciation of the workplace as a learning venue, and an enhanced understanding of the role of mentors in workplace learning.

Based on the interview findings, 24 survey questions (Appendix B) were developed to gain an understanding of the impact of the portfolio development process on a larger group who had completed them as part of their undergraduate degree program. Eighteen of the survey questions (numbers 8-24) have relevancy for this paper as they concern the participants' enhancement of competencies from portfolio creation and their augmented understanding of learning from work experiences. The surveys were sent between summer 2000 and spring 2001 to over 507 working adults who had graduated with a bachelor's degree that contained a portfolio based on work experiences. The total number of survey responses was 151 (30% return rate). The responses were entered into SPSS and descriptive analysis to date was performed on the variables. When two years of data collection is completed (spring 2003), a more extensive statistical analysis will be

undertaken. To date, the descriptive analysis of the data revealed a number of interesting findings that supported the themes derived from the interview data.

Findings

Through one-on-one interview sessions with 8 diverse workers (Brown, 1999) in government, corporate and healthcare institutions and from 151 survey responses (Brown, 2002) to date (Appendix C), the impact of portfolio development on learning and performance in the workplace include, but are not limited to, the following five finding:

1. Portfolio development greatly increased individuals understanding of and pride in their professional accomplishments. From the interview study, all participants remarked on a greater understanding of their work accomplishments. One health care administer put it this way: It [the portfolio] "really made me stop and think . . . it made me remember how I started . . . the steps I have taken along the way . . . things I haven't thought about in years [because] I get so caught up in everyday situations" (Brown 1999, p. 151). A County Waste Management Coordinator noted, I don't think I weighted [my jobs] as much before I did my portfolio.... [Developing] the Worksheet blew me away because I had to depict everything [I did] and what I learned from it. I couldn't believe how much I had done. . . . It gave me more confidence--I mean people started seeing the change in me in meetings. . . . I gained more confidence as a speaker. . . . (Brown, 1999, p. 105)

The survey response to question 16--on portfolio development increasing pride in one's professional accomplishments—concurred with the views of the interview

participants. Of the 151 survey respondents, 89.10% answered strongly agree or agree. (Brown, 2002).

2. Portfolio development augmented individuals' communication, critical thinking and organizational skills. All of the interview participants noted an increase in writing, critical thinking and organization skills after completing their portfolios. One computer programmer emphasized how important writing about his work responsibilities and competencies became for him. He said: "Since writing the portfolio I am beginning to journal my accomplishments at work. It means so much more once you put it in writing" (Brown, 1999, p. 115).

The portfolio development process also facilitated an increase in critical thinking skills among the participants. The waste management coordinator said she gained a new sense of her professional self by thinking critically about the "systematic way of doings things" (Brown, 1999, p. 117) that was a part of her work behavior. Previous to portfolio development she had never put "a value on it" (p.117). Other interviewees echoed her statement.

In the area of organization, a county transportation department employee stated: ". . . it reinforced organization, definitely because it made me organize what I wanted to put on paper. . . . it made me sit down and think of what I wanted to do before I actually did it. The [portfolio] process [was] heavy on organizational skills for me" (Brown, 1999, p. 149).

Other participants confirmed the acquisition of better organizational skills as consequences of portfolio development. A Fortune 500 company regional sales manager

remarked, "I guess it helped me focus on my experience and organize it on paper. This has allowed me to see what my learning process was all about" (Brown, 1999, p. 149).

The survey respondents also strongly agreed or agreed in questions 9, 10, and 11 that their written communication (81.18%), critical thinking (80.58%) and organization skills (82.65%) were augmented by portfolio development (Brown, 2002).

3. Portfolio development enabled individuals to recognize how, what and why they learned in the workplace, which increased their self-knowledge and self-esteem and enabled them to apply what they learned in their careers. Here again, all the interview participants expressed a greater understanding of how learning came about during their careers. One of them remarked that developing the portfolio was the "one single thing that taught me the most about my life" (Brown, 1999, p. 108). He elaborated on how he relived the difficult, satisfying, and influential moments, events, people, and jobs in his life. That process enabled him "to figure out" who he is and how he learned what he did.

Another was very explicit in this area when she exclaimed, almost as a surprise to herself, the following:

> You don't think about how you did the things you did. You just do them. You go through life and you do things and you don't always understand why or how. I don't think many people take the time to step back from something and realize what it was they went through to get there. Like I said, I never slowed down to look back and assess everything and how I did and learned everything from the past to help make me the person I am today. (Brown, 1999, p. 150)

A nurse who was interviewed echoed expressed similar sentiments when she said:

> . . . . it really made me stop and think. It reinforced my belief in myself. It made me remember how I started; it made me remember [the] steps I have taken along the way, certain things that I have done, things that I haven't thought about in years. (Brown, 1999, p. 151)

In regard to application, one participant laughed when he spoke of how the portfolio development process gave him a better understanding of how he learned what he did and used it in different positions. He said he wished he had completed the portfolio earlier in his life to take on job interviews. We both laughed when he proudly said, "Well, I wish I had my portfolio before, because I would employ me, you know. I guess it helped me focus on my experiences and competencies. . . . .[It] gave me more confidence and pride and showed me how I transferred my learning [from job-to-job]. . . . This has helped me, allowed me to see what my learning process was all about" (Brown, 1999, pp. 147 and 152). Another interviewee said it gave her a "blueprint" of her past performances that helped her take more risks at work in expressing her ideas.

In the survey, related questions 13, 14, and 24 on an increase in self-knowledge (84.10%), self-esteem (72.20%), and application of what they learned from portfolio development to their work (78.78%) indicated that a majority of respondents strongly agree or agree on the benefits of portfolio development in these areas (Brown, 2002).

4. Portfolio development increased individuals' appreciation of the workplace as a site of learning. Most important for organizations dealing with development and training return on investment issues, the interviewed employees indicated a greater appreciation of the workplace as a learning venue. Respondents indicated that after developing the portfolio they not only greatly increased their appreciation of their professional accomplishments and abilities, they also came to realize how important a role work had played in the things they learned over the years and in making them the people they are today. Regardless of age, gender, and background, all of the participants attached a deeper sense of meaning and value to their work experiences as a result of

examining their professional lives through the portfolio experience. One interviewee put it this way:

> I have been a nurse for twenty-four years. I've been so lucky—I've been in the right place at the right time, and it's followed me throughout my entire career. I don't have a title after my name, but I know in my heart that the things I've done have impacted in a positive way not only patients' lives but my own life. I don't think there is any better teacher than hands-on experience. I think that you know that it does everybody good to stop [and reflect] at one point or another in their life no matter where they are. [The portfolio] came at a time of my life when I needed to know that I've done a good job. I needed to know that I am in a good place and that I am still doing a good job. I needed to remind myself that [though] I've had some things happen in my life, I have done the best I can . . . and the portfolio just kind of put the whole thing into perspective for me. (Brown, 1999, p. 107)

Another participant had a similar outlook about the importance of learning through work experiences, how work made her the person she is today. She said:

> I was thinking [after writing the portfolio] that I had worked at one company for fourteen years. So from a young adult I became a woman through working with that particular company. I knew from where I had started and where I was [when I left] that I had moved up but never had I looked at in this way. What the portfolio made me realize was that I was much more mature, more confident. I never looked at me as somebody who was special in a way. (Brown, 1999, pp. 108-109)

Questions 19 and 20 of the survey dealt with the respondents' increased understanding of the importance of learning from work experiences. Question 19 asked them if portfolio development increased their understanding of the value of work experiences in learning with 90.75% that strongly agree or agree. Question 20 had a 91.45% strongly agree or agree response rate. It asked respondents if portfolio development increased their understanding of the role of work in their adult development (Brown, 2002).

5. Portfolio development reaffirmed the importance of mentors in professional development. Again all the participants noted the importance of work mentors in their

interviews and how portfolio development reinforced the role of mentors in their career development. One participant spoke of several managers in his current company:

> [As for work], I would say my present manager has been influential, he's been a great mentor for me, he keeps encouraging me in the job and in school. He encourages me to keep going when I feel completely exhausted. My previous manager in Detroit there again supported me, encouraged me, telling me I had the ability to do well in the job and to get a degree. (Brown, 1999, pp. 110-111)

Several of the female interviewees also had influential mentors in their work lives that they spoke about both in their portfolios and in our interviews. For one, her first manager was especially important because of her low self-esteem when she entered the work force. She reported that she had little confidence in herself when she took a job with the county. She only had a high school education and a GED at that. She was pensive as she talked about that period of her life:

> It was the director of the department. Before our department got so vast, he used to come around and he used to interact with a lot of people. He'd say, "you know you're very intelligent, you know, a little rough around the edges, but you have potential." He was my mentor and he used to call me—he had these terms, like I was a sharpshooter. He'd [aim me in the right direction] and because of him I got promoted to like a lead worker, and they would give me more responsibility and he would talk to me weekly asking, "How are things going?" When they had big meetings with [management] I was actually invited in to actually give a presentation from the worker's point of view. So he motivated me a great deal and a lot, and gave me enough confidence that I started realizing that maybe there was something I could do beyond the GED because getting a GED made me feel like I hadn't really accomplished anything and it really lowered my self-esteem. (Brown, 1999, p. 111)

When she attained her first supervisory position, she incorporated her mentor's management style into her own. In her portfolio, she wrote, "I encouraged my staff to be part of the solution, not just the problems. I believed by getting them involved in the decision-making process, and making them know they were important to the unit

promoted motivation" (p. 111). Another women was also influenced greatly by her first boss who was a mentor for work as well as a role model for school:

> My ex-boss, because this is somebody who had . . . come from a New York ghetto --Harlem--, said that from where he had come from had been a long road [to get through work and college] and that I wouldn't have had to do it as hard as he had to because I was in a different setting, it was a different time, and opportunities were there for me to go to school. So he was a great influence on my wanting to move up in my career and finish school. (Brown, 1999, p. 111)

Survey question 21 on portfolio development increasing one's recognition of mentors in one's professional life received a 82.56% strongly agree or agree response rate from respondents concurring, once again, with interview comments (Brown, 2002).

Discussion

Portfolios focus individuals on the outcomes and results of their learning rather than solely on training and performance. Research suggests that training programs that focus on performance alone are usually not successful. Sheckley & Keeton (1997) point out that "in contrast, when individuals engage in a situation with a mastery or learning orientation, they adopt the belief that they can improve their performance" (p. 46).). When the goal of training programs focuses on learning and the individual's needs and interests, they provide a much greater return in the area of employee development (Sheckley & Keeton, 1997). The creation of a portfolio presents employees with an opportunity to participate in a learning experience about them. This has the potential to improve performance by serving, as a form of self-evaluation tool, career development indicator and individual training needs assessment mechanism.

Other studies are revealing that institutionally mandated training programs often do not improve performance (Kehrhahn, 1995; Meers, 1997). This study suggests the greater understanding workers have of their learning throughout their careers, the more

likely they are to understand their own progress and performance. Additionally, the study findings concur with Marsick's (1988) ideas and others on the importance of "reflectivity and critical reflectivity" (p. 197) in formal and informal workplace training as an essential element in learning. She argues, "training has been dominated by behaviorism" (p. 197) and should also consider self-reflective aspects. Though the global economy and high tech environment of today's workplace demands individuals to act at 'the speed of light" (Marsick, 2001), we cannot afford to neglect reflection in assessing our abilities and our performance. Portfolio development can result in giving employees a clearer perspective on their career goals, their past and current professional performance and their personal training needs. This can result in improved workplace performance.

Naisbitt (1984) pointed out nearly two decades ago that as workers we need to move from institutional dependence to self-dependence. To do that we must know who we are and what our abilities are. Portfolio development is one way of assessing where we've been professionally, where we are and where we hope to go. It presents itself as one more tool for self-knowledge by enabling workers to reflect on "the lessons" of their experiences. Moreover, it provides valuable information on how, what and why one learned in the workplace. This empowers and motivates employees to value themselves and their accomplishments.

As Marineau (1999) stated, "the hallmark of an educated person is the capacity to reflect on and learn from experience such that the learning yields meaningful interpretations of life occurrences and informs future actions" (p. 125). Portfolios take time to develop; they are not a quick fix in the arsenal of training options. Once created, however, they are easily updated and serve as a tangible record of learning throughout

one's career. Portfolios can also be utilized at the team and organizational levels to describe more clearly and explain where the group or the organization has been, where it is today and where it hopes to go. Marsick (2000) notes "critical reflection can provide people and systems the ability to enhance what is an otherwise tacit, experiential learning process." (p. 11). Similar to individuals, groups and organizations need to tap into learning that results from cumulative experiences from everyday interactions and processes.

Future research from this longitudinal survey study will present SPSS Crosstabs analysis of variables in an effort to discover the possible connections between self-reflection and increases in learning from work experiences. For the workplace, like any training or educational environment, cannot afford to circumvent reflection and the resulting self-knowledge as a critical piece in deciphering the complex puzzle of human learning. Thus the portfolio can be a useful tool to promote workplace learning and development within organizations.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dr. Judith O. Brown

LEARNING RESUME

JULIA WINTHROP

999 Alexander Road
Miami Lakes, FL 33333

(305) 777-6666 Home
(305) 555-4444 Work

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

12/94 - present	**Human Resources Manager**
6/92 - 11/94	**Human Resources Specialist** American Express Corporation Fort Lauderdale, FL
1/89 - 5/92	**Human Resources Manager** Macy's East Boynton, FL
9/85 - 12/88	**Assistant Human Resources Manager** Macy's New York, Inc. North Miami Beach, FL
12/82 - 8/85	**Store Manager** The Gap Store New York, NY

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS/ACTIVITIES

1/94 - present	**Active Member** Society for Human Resource Management
1/93 - present	**Active Member** American Society for Training and Development
1/92 - present	**Active Member** Association for Psychological Type

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

9/89 - 9/92	**Coordinator** American Red Cross Blood Drive
6/87 - 6/92	**Coordinator** United Way Campaign
2/88 - 2/89	**Volunteer** Big Brothers/Big Sisters of North Miami

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(See Documentation Section for full listing)

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS **1982 - Present = 672.5 hours of training including:**

2000	**American Express Corporation** Diversity Awareness Training (20 hrs)
1994	**American Express Corporation** Leadership Training (40 hrs)
1993	**American Express Corporation** Performance Based Interviewing (8 hrs)
1992	**American Express Corporation** Orientation to Teams (7.5 hrs)
1985	**Macy's** Manager Training (120 hrs)

BOOKS READ:

1994	Isabella, L.A. (1994) *Managing the challenges of trigger events.* San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.
1988	Barnes,J. (1987) *Child development.* New York: Harper & Row.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

N/A

AWARDS AND HONORS

1999	**American Express Corporation** Employee of the Month

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LEARNING WORKSHEET

Name: Julia Winthrop

Date: 7/13/01 SS#: 100-00-0000

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCES: List the learning experience corresponding competencies which you have acquired from professional work experiences.

DATES	NO. OF YRS.	SOURCES OF LEARNING (Positions)	LEARNING EXPERIENCE (Tasks and Responsibilities)	COMPETENCIES (Learning)		
12/94 - Present	7.5	Human Resources Manager American Express Corporation	-manage 2 HR exempt employees and 2 clerical employees	Administration Supervision		
			-conduct staff performance reviews	Critical Thinking Communication		
			-develop and facilitate the Performance Management Process (goal setting, appraisal writing, development planning and career planning) for senior management	Critical Thinking Investigation and Research Communication		
			-formulate reports and give presentations	Communication Critical Thinking		
			-recruit and hire associate and management level employees for the telephone service center	Communication Interpersonal Relations		
			-counsel department of 700 employees and develop seminars to meet the needs of those affected by restructuring	Interpersonal Relations Creativity Communication		
			-appraise developmental needs of line managers, locate training vendors that match needs and oversee training facilitators	Critical Thinking Communication Investigation and Research Supervision		
			-coordinate and develop special courses in the area of "risk management"	Administration Creativity Communication		
			-conduct leadership skill building programs for managers	Interpersonal Relations Communication		

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCES CONTINUED:

DATES	NO. OF YRS.	SOURCES OF LEARNING	LEARNING EXPERIENCE	COMPETENCIES		
6/92 - 11/94	2.5	Human Resources Specialist	- counseled employees in career development	Communication Interpersonal Relations		
			- prepared candidates for management assessment reviews	Communication Critical Thinking		
			- analyzed employee survey results	Investigation and Research Critical Thinking		
			- interviewed and counseled disabled workers	Communication Interpersonal Relations		
			- created support programs for displaced employees	Creativity Communication		
			- assessed source of conflict between staff and supervisors	Critical Thinking Communication		
			- developed solutions for conflict situations incorporating Myers-Briggs character type training	Critical Thinking Creativity		
			- created programs to address the needs of displaced employees	Critical Thinking Creativity		
			- analyzed employee survey results and recommended initiatives to improve morale	Investigation and Research Critical Thinking		
1/89 - 5/92	3.25	Human Resources Manager Macy's East	- organized meetings and workshops	Administration		
			- facilitated counseling sessions for group managers and their staffs	Communication Interpersonal Relations		
			- supervised Assistant Human Resource Manager and clerical employee	Supervision Communication		
			- recruited executives working with managers and retail community for leads	Critical Thinking Investigation and Research		
			- conducted executive training seminars	Communication		
			- oversaw creation of special advertising	Creativity Critical Thinking Communication		

Sample Learning Narrative

I was born and raised in the bustling city of New York—Brooklyn to be exact. All through my childhood and adolescence, I was, like most teenaged girls, enamored with the world of high fashion. Upon graduation from high school, it wasn't surprising that I enrolled at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. In a few years I graduated with an Associate of Arts degree majoring in fashion buying and merchandising.

It was in my first position in 1982, as a Store Manager working for The Gap clothing stores, that I learned managerial skills. After gaining experience working in varied retail positions, I became a Store Manager in Training (SMIT) in Poughkeepsie and in White Plains, New York. As a "SMIT," I apprenticed with a veteran store manager observing how he dealt with customers, hired staff, conducted inventory, and enacted store policy. As a Store Manager I was able to apply this knowledge first hand.

The employees at the store consisted of very young and inexperienced part-timers working side-by-side with long service full time staff. I successfully created an atmosphere where both workers could operate cohesively by having the older, full-time staff serve as mentors to the younger part-timers. At the same time that the older workers trained the younger, the younger transmitted their enthusiasm and energy to the older, thus, creating a harmonious and motivated staff.

As I gained experience, I learned the importance of having good interpersonal skills in training and motivating employees. In teaching new

employees, I learned how to relate to each one individually, teaching them The Gap rules on cash register control, customer service and the opening and closing procedures. Although new to the "teacher" role, I soon found that I could put newcomers at ease enabling them to trust me and, consequently, to learn procedures much faster.

Critical thinking also played a big part in my daily activities as a manager, especially when I transferred to a very high-volume store. Constant problem solving characterized most of my day. For example, along with higher-volume came the burdensome reality of shortages in merchandise. With the assistance of the district manager and dedicated long-service employees, I learned ways to safeguard the merchandise while still making it available and appealing to the customer. By placing a store "greeter" near the entrance, we could effectively promote good customer service while also creating a non intimidating sense of surveillance. In the end, we reduced shortage and maintained sales.

Moreover, as a Store Manager, I was able to explore my creativity. I learned, first hand, methods of presenting merchandise that met company standards. But my real creative talents flourished in my appealing and stylized arrangement of clothing and accessories for the store's window displays. Our store was located on a busy pedestrian street, rather than a mall, so windows could make a big difference in sales. Still fresh as a manager, I was nonetheless honored with an Appreciation Award for the appealing and innovative nature of my window displays.

In 1985, I decided to relocate to South Florida in order to be closer to my elderly parents who had recently moved here themselves. Although I chose to resign my managerial position with The Gap, I was certain that I could recuperate my losses with time. While working part-time at Macy's Department store, I was told of an opening for an Assistant Human Resources Manager soon to be available. After some consideration, I decided to apply and take the challenge of career change into the Human Resources field. I was soon offered my first position in the career that I have now come to love.

My first Human Resources position taught me, for one thing, the importance of strong communication skills in training employees. This position centered mainly around training, and as such, required that I customarily speak to groups of 20 to 40 employees. I had to develop public speaking skills right away and quickly overcome the anxiety that comes with being the center of attention. In order to do this, I studied how to maintain good eye contact with my audience while still keeping to the text at hand. Also, to liven up the material, I tried varying speech patterns and volume, throwing in a joke here and there, and moving about the room, rather than hiding behind a podium or desk.

I carried over my skills in interpersonal communication learned as a store manager, as well. As a trainer, it was my task to keep each class up to pace with the others. That meant offering individual guidance and assistance to employees experiencing difficulties. Classroom management also meant learning how to tame the "class clown" and simultaneously draw out the introvert. As I matured in this job, I was also responsible for counseling

employees on their career paths and assisting them in finding creative solutions to problems with other employees.

Diplomatic but effective communication skills were also required in my role as Chair of the store wide safety committee. Here, I was responsible for assigning employees to various areas of the store. They were responsible for locating and reporting any safety hazards at monthly meetings, which I in turn conducted. After the Operations Manager reviewed the problems and prioritized them, I prepared updates, **THE ESSAY CONTINUES UNTIL ALL POSITIONS ARE COVERED**

SAMPLE DOCUMENTATION
VERIFICATION OF COMPETENCIES

TRAVEL RELATED SERVICES
An American Express company

American Express
Travel Related Services Company, Inc.
Southern Region Operations Center
777 American Expressway
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33337

JULY 1, 2001

This is to verify that Julia Winthrop has been employed by American Express Corporation since January of 1989 to the present. Ms. Winthrop was first hired as a Human Resources Specialist and then was promoted to her current position as Human Resources Manager.

Human Resources Specialist 6/92 - 11/94: As a Human Resources Specialist, Ms. Winthrop performed a number of duties. Her main responsibility was to counsel employees in career development. To this end she created support programs for disabled and displaced employees. She received on-going training in this area and incorporated her expertise on the Myers-Briggs character type indicator into her work in conflict resolution between staff and supervisors. Additionally, she prepared Credit Department candidates for performance assessment reviews. She also helped to evaluate employees for team leadership positions. Julia also delivered numerous workshops to managers in order to improve communication between labor and management teams. Her excellent organizational, communication, critical thinking and interpersonal skills in accomplishing her goals led to her promotion in 1992.

Human Resources Manager 12/94 - present: In December of 1994, Julia became Human Resources Manager for the Telephone Service Center and was responsible for overseeing consulting services for a department of over 700 employees. She administers tailor-made, in-house training programs and meets with line managers in the southeast region to appraise developmental needs of employees. She also supervisors a staff of four and creates training courses for senior managers. Julia is in charge of developing and processing the company's Performance Management Process. This includes goal setting, appraisal writing and career planning for managers. Her outstanding communication and administrative skills have made her one of the most sought after and respected employees in our organization. Julia recruits and hires associate and management level employees for the Telephone Service Center.

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In the years that she has been with American Express Corporation, Julia has repeatedly demonstrated the highest levels of achievement and competency. We at look forward to her continued growth with the company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Joseph Catalano

Joseph Catalano
Vice President
Telephone Service Center

Appendix B

STUDENT SURVEY FALL 2001
Thank you in advance for your responses.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree
1. The portfolio seminar gave me a good foundation for developing my portfolio.	1	2	3	4
2. Module #1 on the Introductory Section of the portfolio helped me to develop my Goal Statement.	1	2	3	4
3. Module #2 on the Experiential Learning Resume helped me to understand and list positions/activities that met the criteria for college-level learning.	1	2	3	4
4. Module # 3 on the Documentation helped me to use research and critical thinking skills to understand the differences between primary, secondary, and unacceptable documentation.	1	2	3	4
5. Module #4 on The Learning Assessment Worksheet helped me to use critical thinking and analysis skills to distinguish between experiences (tasks/responsibilities) and learning (competencies).	1	2	3	4
6. Module #5 on The Autobiographical Learning Essay helped me to organize, synthesize, and evaluate my learning from experience in essay form.	1	2	3	4

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree
7. The portfolio advisement sessions I had helped me to develop my portfolio.	1	2	3	4
8. The portfolio development process was valuable to me beyond the credits I received for my portfolio.	1	2	3	4
9. The portfolio development process increased my organizational skills.	1	2	3	4
10. The portfolio development process increased my written communication skills.	1	2	3	4
11. The portfolio development process increased my critical thinking skills.	1	2	3	4
12. The portfolio development process increased my self-reflection.	1	2	3	4
13. The portfolio development process increased my self-knowledge.	1	2	3	4
14. The portfolio development process increased my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
15. The portfolio development process increased my self-confidence.	1	2	3	4
16. The portfolio development process increased my pride in my professional accomplishments.	1	2	3	4
17. The portfolio development process increased my motivation to achieve future professional and/or educational goals.	1	2	3	4
18. The portfolio development process increased my understanding of the role of work in my career development.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. The portfolio development process increased my understanding of the value of work experiences in learning.	1	2	3	4
20. The portfolio development process increased my understanding of the role work played in my adult development.	1	2	3	4
21. The portfolio development process increased my recognition of mentors in my professional life.	1	2	3	4
22. The portfolio development process increased my appreciation of learning from community activities.	1	2	3	4
23. When I completed my portfolio I had a great sense of accomplishment.	1	2	3	4
24. I applied what I learned from developing a portfolio to my work and/or personal life.	1	2	3	4

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING: **(USE OTHER SIDE AS NEEDED)**

25. Briefly tell us how you would improve the portfolio seminar.

26. Briefly tell us about how you would improve the portfolio instructional modules.

27. Briefly tell us how to improve portfolio advisement.

28. Briefly tell us any emotional reaction(s) you may have had (positive or negative) to portfolio development (such as excitement, sadness, happiness, nostalgia, frustration).

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

GENDER: Female_____Male_____.

CULTURE/ETHNICITY: African-American _____
Caribbean-Black _____
Caucasian _____
Hispanic _____
Other _____

AGE: 25-30 _____
31-40 _____
41-50 _____
51-60 _____
61-80 _____

DEGREE ACHIEVED: Bachelor of Liberal Studies _____
Specialization _____

Bachelor of Professional Studies _____
Specialization _____

Bachelor of Science in:

- **Health Services Administration _____**
- **Information Technology _____**
- **Legal Studies _____**
- **Professional Administration _____**

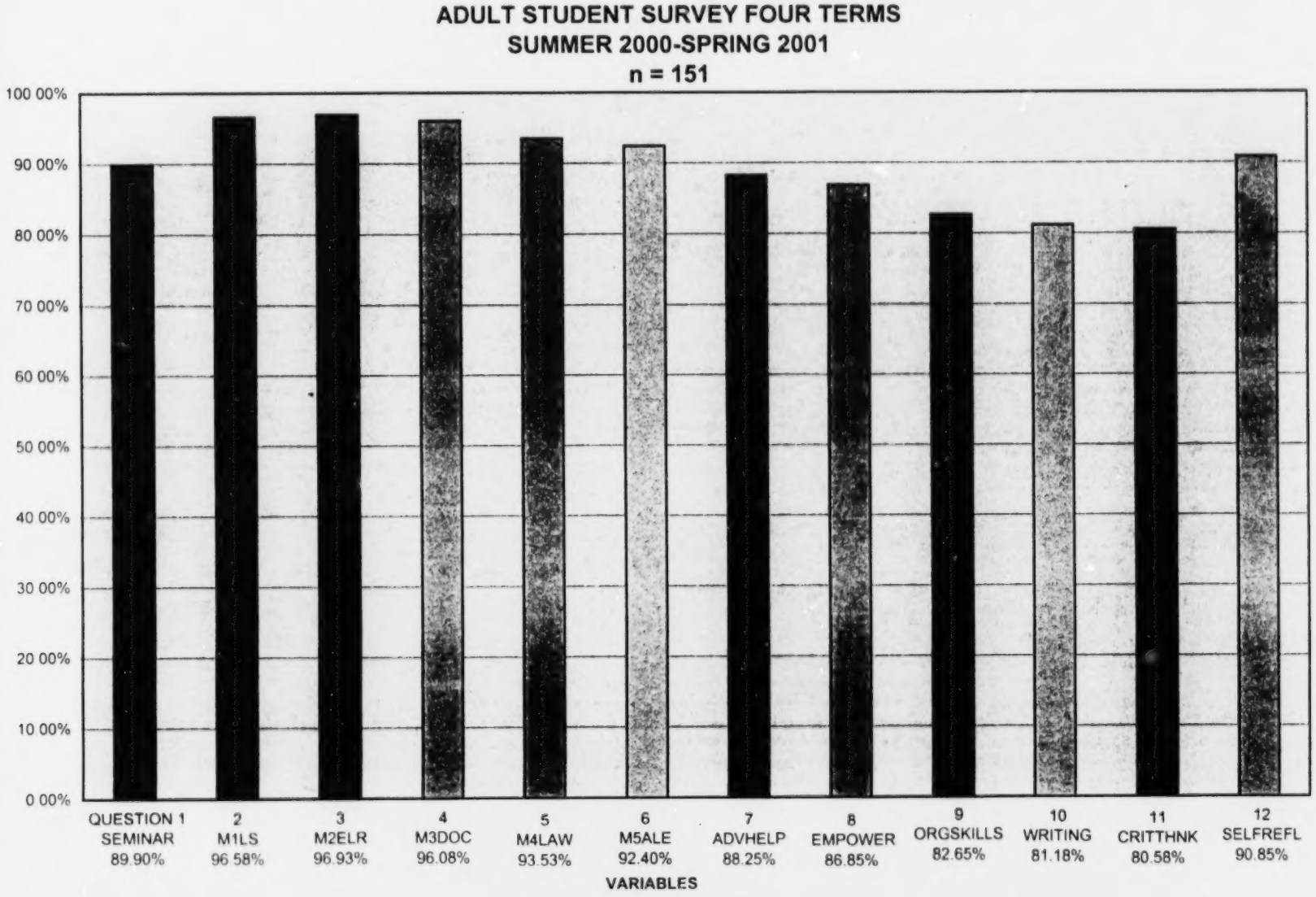
Bachelor of Public Administration_____.

PRIMARY ACE SITE WHERE YOU ARE ADVISED:

Cutler Ridge_____Kendall_____.
Miami Main_____Pembroke Pines_____.
Broward-Davie_____Commercial_____.
Boynton_____Palm Beach Grdn_____.
Port St Lucie_____Lee-Collier_____.
Orlando-Sandlake_____Orlando-University___.
Tallahassee_____Brevard_____.
Doral_____Melbourne_____.

MANY THANKS!

Appendix C


ADULT STUDENT SURVEY FOUR TERMS
SUMMER 2000-SPRING 2001
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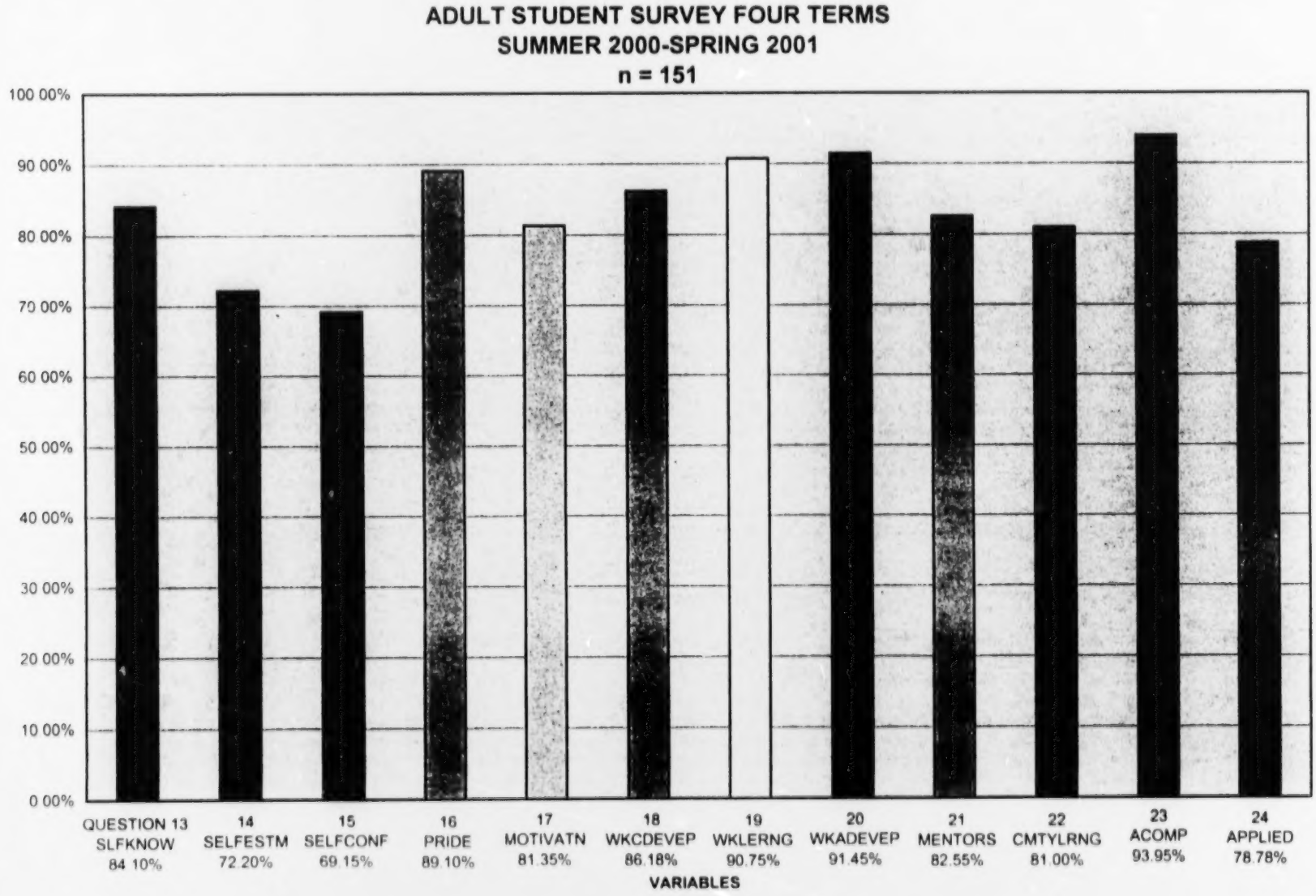
80 00%
70 00%
60 00%
50 00%
40 00%
30 00%
20 00%
10 00%
0 00%
QUESTION 1 SEMINAR 89.90%
2 M1LS 96.58%
3 M2ELR 96.93%
4 M3DOC 96.08%
5 M4LAW 93.53%
6 M5ALE 92.40%
7 ADVHELP 88.25%
8 EMPOWER 86.85%
9 ORGSKILLS 82.65%
10 WRITING 81.18%
11 CRITTHNK 80.58%
12 SELFREFL 90.85%
VARIABLES


ADULT STUDENT SURVEY FOUR TERMS
SUMMER 2000-SPRING 2001
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QUESTION 13
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14
SELFESTM
72 20%
15
SELFCONF
69 15%
16
PRIDE
89 10%
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MOTIVATN
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WKCDEVEP
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19
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20
WKADEVEP
91 45%
21
MENTORS
82 55%
22
CMTYLRNG
81 00%
23
ACOMP
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24
APPLIED
78 78%
VARIABLES

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